

Applicants respectfully submit that the specification, at page 19, lines 4-19 clearly convey to one skilled in the art that the inventors, at the time the present application was filed, understood and intended that the claimed ribbon material could be stripped without damaging the polarization-maintaining fibers. Using the language from the specification, it would have been well understood that "the shape of the ribbon portion 2 is sometimes non-uniform due to the in-flow of the adhesive 36 in the V-groove portions 23 of the ribbon-making jig 20 for other causes." Relating this phrase to Figs. 2(a)-2(c), the adhesive 36 applied through hole 28 sometimes extends along gaps between the round polarization-maintaining fibers 12 and the V-shaped grooves 23. Additionally, adhesive 36 sometimes extends along gaps formed between the round polarization-maintaining fibers 12 and the flat upper mold 26. The resulting "in-flow of the adhesive 36 in the V-groove portions 23" interferes with the further assembly of the ribboned polarization-maintaining fibers 1 with a final assembly or other useful connection.

Applicants respectfully submit that one skilled in the art would readily understand that any adhesive 36 that extends beyond the ribbon portion 2 due to "in-flow of the adhesive 36 in the V-groove portions 23" would have to be stripped away before the fibers could be assembled with any mating parts. Therefore, the statement from the specification that "the coating in the end portion is removed with a hot stripper as in the case of the ordinary optical fiber ribbon" would be well understood in the art to mean that the claimed ribbon portion can be stripped from the portion of the polarization-maintaining fibers 12 that extends beyond the ribbon portion 2 without damaging the fibers. Clearly, for the stripped fibers to have any use, parts of the ribbon portion would have to be stripped without causing damage to the fibers.

It is clear from the foregoing that the specification supports the language of the pending claims. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

2. Claims 2-6 and 20-22 were rejected under §102(b) and §103(a) over Ichiki. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 21 recites, among other things, a ribboned polarization-maintaining fiber comprising a ribbon portion that has first and second lateral ends, a length of 2 to 300 mm, and surrounds at least some of the polarization-maintaining fibers. The polarization-maintaining fibers extend individually from the second lateral end of ribbon portion.

Ichiki discloses, in Figs. 1-4, a process of manufacturing a fiber array 20 including a lower substrate 22 attached to an upper substrate 24 using an adhesive 60. Fig. 3 is an intermediate step prior to the placement of the upper substrate 24 completing the array. Examiner Simone contends that the adhesive 60 within the slot 50 (which slot is used to help locate and retain the adhesive 60 and the polarization-maintaining fibers 42 within the lower substrate 22), is a ribbon portion for the purposes of comparison with the ribbon recited in claim 21. For the reasons stated below, Applicants respectfully disagree.

Appendix A hereto is a series of drawings that show the adhesive 60 relative to the fibers at various locations along the length of the array. Applicants respectfully submit that the adhesive 60 surrounds the polarization-maintaining fibers 42 (as claimed) only during the intermediate step of production, and even then only within the slot 50. For example, Section 2 in the attached drawings corresponds to the slot portion 50. The adhesive 60 surrounds the fibers only within the slot portion 50 (again, only during the intermediate step of production). In all other sections of the fiber array, the adhesive does not surround the polarization-maintaining fibers 42. This is due to contact between adjacent fibers, or contact between the fibers and the lower substrate 22 or the upper substrate 24.

In light of the foregoing, the only portion of the adhesive in Ichiki that corresponds to the claimed ribbon portion is that portion of the adhesive within the slot 50. However, the length of the slot 50 is 0.7 mm, not 2 to 300 mm, as claimed. The purpose of the slot 50 is to register or lock the adhesive covered fibers within the lower substrate 22. As such, the length of the slot 50 (0.7 mm) is sufficient for this

purpose. There is certainly no disclosure or suggestion in Ichiki to increase the length of the slot to a length of 2 to 300 mm, as recited in claim 21.

Therefore, Ichiki fails to disclose the use of or motivate one skilled in the art to create a ribbon portion having a length of 2 to 300 mm surrounding at least some of the polarization-maintaining fibers, as recited in claim 21.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims herein define patentable subject matter over the art of record. Accordingly, Examiner Simone is requested to issue a Notice of Allowance in due course.

If Examiner Simone believes that further contact with Applicants' attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, she is herein requested to call Applicants' attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,

November 7, 2005
Date

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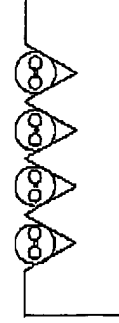
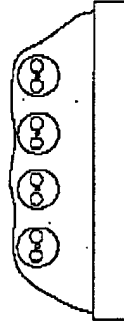
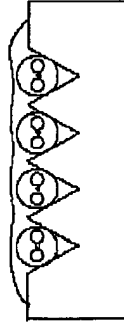
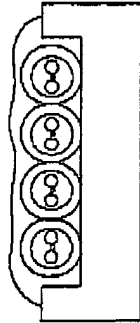
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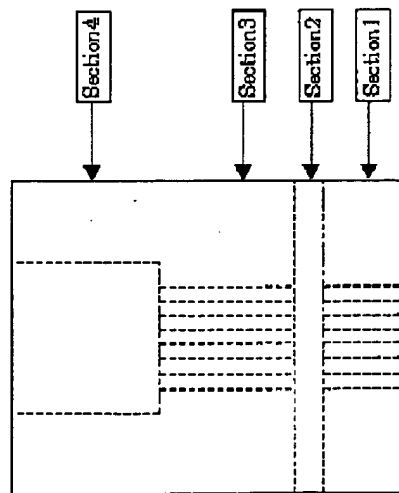
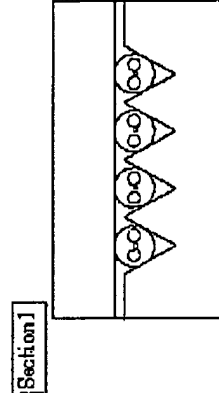
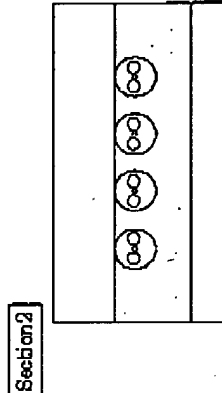
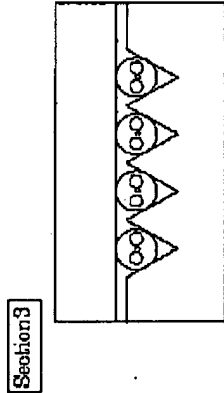
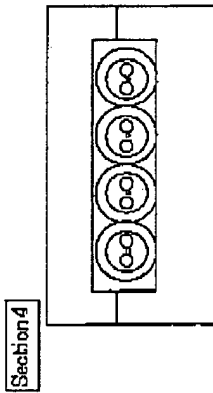
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Attachment: Appendix A- Drawing sheet

*Intermediate Step
In Production of the
Optical Fiber Array*



*Completed Optical
Fiber Array*



Appendix A